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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [UNGA](#)  
SUBJECT: UNGA PRESIDENCY 2008: THWARTING GRULAC CONSENSUS  
FOR NICARAGUAN CANDIDATE

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY U.S. DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE ALEJA  
NDRO WOLFF

11. (U) This is an action request. See paras 2 & 7.

12. (C) Summary. Many GRULAC permreps remain uneasy about the prospects of Nicaragua emerging as the GRULAC candidate for (and likely occupant of) the 2008 UNGA Presidency (PGA), but are reluctant to take action to identify an alternative. Based upon the gracious withdrawal of the Dominican Republic from the race against winner Costa Rica for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council, USUN had discreetly floated the idea of someone proposing a Dominican Republic candidate for UNGA President in 2008 as a consolation prize. The Dominicans were interested but no one stepped forward. Latin permreps acknowledge they have a problem but do not know how to fix it. USUN understands that foreign ministers in the region are now monitoring the issue and the launch of another candidate will require their input. Nicaragua and its allies are pressing for a decision soon. Foreign Ministers will gather in Santiago for the Ibero-American Summit in early November, and the issue will likely be on the mind of many. USUN believes the summit may be one of the last opportunities to launch an alternative candidate and seeks Department advice on how to lower Nicaragua's odds. End Summary.

13. (C) USUN has been quietly consulting with like-minded Latin delegations about the prospects of Nicaragua putting up suspended priest and former Nicaraguan Foreign Minister, Miguel Descoto, as a candidate for the President of the UN General Assembly in 2008. (Note: the PGA rotates annually among the regional groups. It will be GRULAC's turn for the next General Assembly session which begins in September 2008. While the election is not until the Spring, the regional group in question tries to reach consensus on its candidate as soon as possible, and then lobbies other regional groups in the run up to the election. The UNGA has not had contested votes for the PGA; the regional candidate generally has a lock on the position. End Note). The country that announces first often has an edge in the race. The GON has taken the initiative, already circulated Descoto's C.V. among GRULAC members, and is trying to secure consensus for him as the Central American candidate. While most of the other Central American states are unenthusiastic about Descoto, they are reluctant to oppose him, in the name of regional solidarity.

14. (C) During the contested race between Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic for one of the non-permanent (GRULAC) seats on the UN Security Council, USUN had floated the idea that the loser seek the UNGA Presidency as a consolation prize. Several Latin delegations warmed to the idea but no one came forward to propose the Dominican Republic when it lost. Following the election, other Latin permreps suggested that the Dominican Republic had a brief window to take advantage of the good will and standing they attained by

graciously withdrawing from race after the second round of voting. Two weeks have passed and no one has moved. The DR appears willing to consider the UNGA Presidency but only if proposed by another member state. Other delegations are reluctant to propose the DR, as the one that does would be labeled the spoiler, and incur the wrath of Venezuelan, Cuban, and Bolivian delegations. As one GRULAC perm rep put it, "we might as well run ourselves."

15. (C) Close collaborator Peruvian PermRep Voto-Bernales admitted to Ambassador Wolcott on October 17 that he and other like-minded GRULAC permreps do not know what to do or how to proceed to engineer an alternative to Nicaragua. They acknowledge that Nicaragua's vitriolic and anti-U.S. speech during the UNGA General Debate makes the GON unsuitable to lead the UNGA. Voto-Bernales knows of at least six or seven GRULAC countries which would automatically support the DR if they announced. He insisted that "the big guys" -- Brazil and Mexico -- will not do anything since the UNGA Presidency is not a priority for them. (Note: Canadian Mission diplomats dispute that analysis and believe Brazil would be key to shifting GRULAC toward another candidate. End Note) The Peruvian also suggested that Caribbean states would likely endorse the DR, but remained unsure how to motivate them to move against Venezuela and Cuba. He also concluded that whichever country joined the race would likely be defeated by Nicaragua, but the challenge would bring down Nicaragua's candidacy in the process, leaving open the chances for a third candidate.

16. (C) Nicaragua's supporters are pressing for a GRULAC decision soon. Colombian Permrep Blum told Ambassador Godard on October 27 that she was sure Descoto's candidacy would get raised at the monthly GRULAC meeting on October 29 (it did not), but she and several others were prepared to block

consensus, claiming no instructions. (Note: Apparently, because of the press of UNGA resolutions coming up for action, the GRULAC put off discussion on the 2008 UNGA presidency until November. The GRULAC coordinator for November is Saint Kitts and Nevis.)

#### COMMENT AND ACTION REQUEST

17. (C) USUN remains concerned that GRULAC inaction will lead to a Descoto-endorsed candidacy by default. Voto-Bernales suggested that launching an alternative in New York will now be more difficult. Foreign Ministers have become interested and will need to be involved. The upcoming Ibero-American Summit in early November in Santiago will bring these ministers together. While mindful of our need to stay behind the scenes, USUN believes the summit may be one of the last targets of opportunity to launch the DR's candidacy for the UNGA presidency or another alternative to Nicaragua and requests that the Department pulse capitals to determine our best next steps. Spain and Portugal, who will be in Santiago, may also be helpful.

Khalilzad